

HARPSWELL *BULLETIN*

News for Harpswell Residents & Property Owners from the Town Office – May '09

Town Web Site: www.harpswell.maine.gov

March 2009 Town Meeting

The eight-hour 2009 Annual Town Meeting of March 14 may hold the distinction of being the longest continuous one-day Town Meeting in Harpswell's history. Voters approved a municipal budget of \$4,046,288—a reduction of 2.3% from prior year appropriations. Basic operations and service levels were primarily maintained, while new spending proposals were mostly defeated including a wind turbine near the Recycling Center, sidewalk reinforcement work to the Cribstone Bridge and infrastructure for a workforce housing development project on Harpswell Neck. Voters did approve spending for certain new non-recurring items such as an upgrade to the accounting software system (\$30,800) and rehabilitation of the Town Dock at Pott's Point (\$15,000 of new appropriation plus \$15,000 from an existing Marine Hazards account). In addition, capital projects were funded as follows: a \$650,000 bond for the Town's capital roads plan, primarily for a major reconstruction of Ash Point Road in 2009; \$140,000 for the reserve account for the purchase of emergency vehicles; and \$10,000 to establish a reserve account for renovations to the Orr's Island Library. After considerable discussion, scrutiny and debate, the final budget adopted included a 3% wage and salary increase for Town employees, an appropriation of \$116,000 for Curtis Memorial Library in Brunswick and continued contractual funding for law enforcement services (\$328,600) and marine patrol services (\$188,000) with the Cumberland County Sheriff's Department. While this budget represents a decrease in municipal appropriations from the prior year, that benefit is offset by a significant anticipated reduction in non-property tax revenue sources, particularly with regard to excise taxes, interest earnings and sales of recyclables. The projected non-property tax revenue sources totaling \$1,950,000 (down 9% from 2008) leaves \$2,096,288 to be collected from property taxes for the funding of municipal services. This funding is exclusive of the county tax and the school budget.

The Town Meeting voted to continue funding the Harpswell Heating Assistance Program for low to moderate income households and to add a home weatherization component. Voters also approved establishing the Joyce Brown Swim Fund to provide scholarships for children to participate in the Summer Swim Program and to accept donations to the fund.

An Open Space Plan as proposed by the Harpswell Conservation Commission was adopted to serve as a guide for educating the public and property owners as well as for planning for possible future protection of areas in the Town deemed to have high-value open space significance. The Town amended its Shoreland Zoning Ordinance, Basic Land Use Ordinance and Definitions Addendum to bring those land use ordinances into compliance with the State of Maine minimum shoreland zoning requirements prior to the July 1, 2009 deadline. Amendments were also made to the Town's Recall Ordinance and Shellfish Ordinance, and two parcels on Basin Point were re-zoned from Shoreland Residential to Shoreland Business.

In elections, Elinor Multer was elected to the office of Selectman, Assessor and Overseer of the Poor; Robert Venard to Road Commissioner and Joanne Rogers to the School Board—all for three-year terms.

Town Line Boundary Matter

The March 14 Annual Town Meeting approved Article 47 which authorized the Board of Selectmen to request that the State of Maine review its 1998 decision regarding the boundary line between the Town of Harpswell and the Town of Brunswick. State Representative Leila Percy has introduced a bill (LD 1410) entitled “An Act to Restore the Historical Town Boundary Between Harpswell and Brunswick.” The measure has been assigned to the Joint Standing Committee on State and Local Government. The proposed bill reads as follows:

Section. 1. Boundary line between the Town of Harpswell and the Town of Brunswick. The common boundary of the Town of Harpswell, County of Cumberland and the Town of Brunswick, County of Cumberland is that certain boundary created and described in Province of Massachusetts Bay, Province Laws 1738-39, Chapter 28, enacted January 26, 1738, described as follows: beginning at the mouth of the Androscoggin River to run by the water-side, south-westerly to the south-west point of a place called the new meadows; thence to strike across the cove, upon a course north-north-west till it meets and intersects the upper end of Merryconeeg neck, four rods above the narrows of said neck, commonly called the carrying-place; thence to run along the shore to a neck of land called Mare Point, and a mile and a quarter down said neck.

Section 2 of this bill repeals the law that establishes the current boundary. A hearing on the bill is expected in the next few weeks.

Possible Harpswell Elementary School Consolidation

Several weeks ago the Comprehensive Strategic Planning Committee (CSPC), a committee of the MSAD # 75 Board of Directors, made a recommendation to the School Board that the consolidation of the two elementary schools in Harpswell be considered for implementation as soon as the fall of 2009. Subsequently, MSAD #75 put together a thirteen-member Work Team comprised of five School Board Directors (all members of the CSPC), two principals, two staff members, two parent representatives, and two Town representatives selected by Selectmen. The Town’s representatives are Selectman Elinor Multer and community member Linda Hall. It was recently announced by Superintendent Michael Wilhelm that the proposed consolidation would not be considered in time for implementation this September. However, it is expected that the Work Team will likely make its recommendation in late spring to the full School Board.

Selectmen adopted a resolution asking that if the School Board votes to consolidate the elementary schools and close West Harpswell School, that decision be made in time to give the Town a year to explore such options as keeping the school or a portion of the school open, looking at potential reuses, etc. Recent Work Team discussions have focused on the impacts that consolidation would have on staffing, transportation, programming and facilities. Currently, 101 students are enrolled at Harpswell Islands School in kindergarten through fifth grade, while 71 students attend West Harpswell School. Declining enrollment, cost savings, and equity across the district with regard to personnel and resources have provided the rationale for giving consideration to the consolidation of the Harpswell elementary schools.

Walking Opportunities in Harpswell

Take a Hike—National Trails Day: In honor of National Trails Day, the Harpswell Recreation Department and the Recreation Committee are organizing a group hike for Sunday, **June 7**, 2009, 3:00 p.m. on the **Cliff Trail**. Meet in the parking lot behind the Town Office. This trail is a 2-mile loop that leads to one of the highest points in Harpswell. The marked trail features a shore walk along tidal Strawberry Creek, two ‘fairy-house zones, and spectacular views from 150-foot cliffs overlooking Long Reach.

On Saturday, May 16, 9:00 a.m., the Friends of Baxter State Park (FBSP) will host a walk on Harpswell’s **Austin Cary Lot**, guided by forester Barrie Brusila of Mid-Maine Forestry. The property is located on Long Reach Lane, just before the Harpswell Islands School if traveling south on Route 24. After turning onto Long Reach lane, go about 1/10 of a mile to the parking lot on the left. The guided walk, which is free of charge and open to the public, will end by noon. Austin Cary was one of Maine’s first forest researchers and a Maine Forest Commissioner, and this was his woodlot of approximately 222 acres. The property was purchased in 1973-74 using money from one of Governor Percival Baxter’s trust funds, following the provisions of the trust agreement in his will. The letter outlining the purchase stated the following: “...Additionally, that area be held for management of game species, particularly waterfowl for reasons of the marshland habitat, and for a model or demonstration forest...” The property is open to low impact recreational uses.

For more information **about other walking and hiking opportunities** in Harpswell, please visit the Recreation Program section of the Town’s website at www.harpswell.maine.gov

Community Development Block Grants

As part of the Cumberland County entitlement district for Community Development Block Grant funding, the Town applied for and received preliminary approval for the following:

Municipal Weatherization Program

The Town expects to receive \$10,000 to create and administer a municipal weatherization program for low to moderate income families to improve the energy efficiency of their homes. Plans are to partner with a non-profit, such as United Way or Habitat for Humanity, in an effort to share volunteer resources, trainers and tools. To become a volunteer or to see if you may qualify, please contact Deputy Town Administrator Terri Sawyer at the Town Office, 833-5771.

Zoning and Performance Standards at Mitchell Field

\$25,000 will be awarded to the Town for the development of zoning and performance standards at Mitchell Field. In order to attract businesses to the 9-acre marine-related zone approved in the Master Plan, it is critical for the Town to establish these standards so prospective businesses know what is expected and allowed. A consultant will be hired to conduct research, draft initial zoning text, incorporate public review and involvement, and generate a final draft of zoning/regulatory framework for the Town to consider adopting.

Road Improvements at Hamilton Place—A Workforce Housing Development

This CDBG funding will help to make the homes in this development more affordable by reducing the costs associated with the surfacing of Benaquist Way and for ditching, loaming and seeding the road’s apron. These costs are estimated to be in the neighborhood of \$40,000. Final surface paving will occur once the 11 homes on Benaquist Way are constructed.

Important Dates

Household Hazardous Waste Day—May 9, Bath Land Fill, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.,
Pre-registration is required by contacting Bath Public Works directly at 443-8356; questions may
be directed to Harpswell Recycling Center & Transfer Station Manager Fred Cantu at 833-6472

Memorial Day Parade and Observances—May 25, Parade at 11:00 a.m., Harpswell Center

School District Budget Meeting—May 30, Orion Performing Arts Center, Topsham, 11:00 a.m.

District Budget Validation Referendum—June 9, Voting from 9:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. at
Merriconeag Grange for Harpswell Neck voters; Old Orr's Island Schoolhouse for Orr's and
Bailey Island voters; and the Cundy's Harbor Community Building for Great Island voters

New Schedule for Recycling Center and Transfer Station—Starting September 7, 2009, the
Recycling Center and Transfer Station will be CLOSED on Mondays. Hours of operation will
be Tuesday - Saturday 8:00 a.m. to 4:15 p.m. from May 1 to December 31. From January 1 to
May 1 the facility will also be closed on Thursdays. (Note: Transfer Station closes at 4:00 p.m.)